

No. VI.—NOTES ON THE TSINE (*BOS SONDAICUS*).*(With a plate.)*

The late Mr. R. Lydekker in his "Game Animals of India" discusses the Tsine at considerable length, and quotes the late C. W. A. Bruce and Major G. P. Evans on the subject. As I have had the advantage of hunting and studying the Tsine after reading these authors, the following notes may be of interest.

I spent June and July 1914 hunting Tsine in the Magwe district of Upper Burma, having previously hunted them in the Yamethin district on the other side of the Pegu Yomas. I subsequently met with them, in 1920, in Siam in the lower Meping valley. In all I have seen over twenty full-grown bulls and as many young ones, and not less than two hundred cows.

Amongst the bulls I found the body colour most variable, but in only one instance, related below, did I see any variation from the usual light chestnut of the cows.

The prevalent colour of the old bulls seemed to be khaki; blue-grey and the rich bay of a copper-beech being next in order of frequency.

The first bull I saw was red and, though adult, he did not carry a big head; I am inclined to think that this shade of colour eventually develops into the copper-beech shade. Then I came on two bulls fighting, one of which was grey and the other chocolate brown; this last being the only bull I saw of this colour. It is remarkable that in this instance, although the torn-up ground and the clots of blood flung about bore witness to the fierceness of the battle, there were no cows near or any trace of their recent presence.

I then saw three khaki bulls in succession and, after them, two which were constantly together and were bay and grey respectively. I spent several weary days hunting these, as the grey bull carried a grand head, but they beat me every time.

Towards the end of June 1914 I had been one day through a previously unvisited tract of forest and seen the tracks of a small herd of four cows, a calf and a young bull. On the way back to camp I crossed the very fresh tracks of a big bull and a single cow coming from the direction where we had seen the first lot of tracks. I took up the tracks and within half a mile came to a stream which the bull and his mate had crossed so recently that the mud was still clouding the water. Going up the far slope I suddenly spotted the legs of a Tsine which was standing behind a large bush about 50 yards away: the head was not visible and only small portions of the back could be seen through the leaves. From what I could see the body-colour seemed uniformly chestnut red and quite unlike any of the numerous cows I had seen before, so, knowing that there was only one of each sex in question, I naturally assumed that this was the bull, waited till part of the shoulder showed clear through the leaves, fired and ran in on the shot. As I did so, to my horror, a large dark-coloured cow rolled down the slope dead. I heard a stick break to my left and, on looking round saw an immense bull standing broadside on to me about 60 yards away and about 40 from where the cow had been. My first thought was, "Where has that buffalo come from?" for he was dark slaty-blue, carried an immense pair of horns of great girth (certainly bigger than Mr. Tarleton's record pair which I frequently saw in Rangoon) and stood a hand higher than any bull I saw before or after. As he turned to bolt I fired, but did not allow for his swinging off, so the bullet, striking behind the shoulder, passed out of the chest forwards doing little damage. I followed him up and found him lying down a mile on, but he bolted without giving me a chance. I never came up with him again, though I put in two more days after him; but the ground was hard after a break in the rains and the blood failed after the first two miles. While following him up on the first evening we came on the small herd whose tracks we had seen and they were now a



TSAINÉ or BANTING (*Bos sinuatus*)
Shot at Taungdwindgyi, U. Burma. Length of Horns 29½ inches

cow less in number ; one of them was a dark chestnut red like the victim of my mistake.

Of bulls seen subsequently, two were red, two dark bay, and four were khaki. The big bull illustrated was one of the latter.

In Siam in April 1920, while travelling in the Meping valley near the head of its feeder the Klong Klung, I came on a herd of Tsine while I was on the march. I was walking a quarter of a mile ahead of my transport and saw the herd about 200 yards below me in some open jungle. It consisted of six cows and two bulls : one bull, a young one of slightly darker red than the cows, the other of most unusual colouring. He was a big beast, but with only a moderate pair of horns ; grey down to his median lateral line and, below that, dark red with the usual white shanks : he seemed much bulkier and less active than the bulls I saw in Burma, and had a slight but decided hump. In fact in build he appeared as much bison as Tsine. I ran down to the herd trying to get close in, as I had only a 12-bore and lethal bullets with me, and by using a fallen tree as cover, got within 20 yards. I tried both barrels and had a miss-fire with each. The herd made off and ran into my transport then turned and bolted, the main body clearing right away but the bigger bull came straight back towards me. I had changed the cartridges and waited till he got within 20 yards of me, then had two more miss-fires. The bull came within ten yards, then pulled up and thundered away in a fresh direction. I was standing in high undergrowth and it was then quite evident that he had not really seen me before, but if I had killed him while he was coming towards me I should have been convinced that he was charging unprovoked. I found that the cartridges were some which had got wet and which I had told my orderly to throw away, but instead he had dried them in the sun and replaced them in my haversack.

That Tsine can be really dangerous the following incident will show.

I was after bison one day in July 1914 in a very remote bit of jungle in the Pegu Yomas, and during the morning repeatedly crossed the tracks of a solitary bull Tsine, which had evidently been living there for a long time. This was curious as I had seen no other Tsine tracks, of bull or cow, for several miles. As I could find no fresh bison tracks I took up some 24 hour old tracks of this Tsine about mid-day, and ran them for nearly an hour to the flat top of a ridge where I decided to have lunch. I had passed the rifle to the Burman gun-bearer and turned round to call up the tiffin-cooli, who was climbing the slope below, when I heard a crashing behind me : I looked back just in time to see a big khaki-coloured bull Tsine launch himself full speed towards me from a clump of small cane about 30 yards away. The Burman tried to bolt with the rifle, and the delay in grabbing it from him brought the bull right on top of me, so that I had difficulty in dodging him. I had intended swinging round and putting a bullet behind his ribs, but he whipped round, extraordinarily quickly for so large an animal, and hunted me in and out of the bamboo clumps so that I finally only just saved myself by diving sideways between two of them while he charged past. He then tried the Burmans and went off just as I had picked myself up in time to fire a hasty shot at him. I hit him a shade too far back but on following him up found he had already lain down twice in less than a couple of miles and I felt certain of getting him, when a tremendous rain-storm broke and washed out all the tracks. I fancy he must have been previously wounded and gone off to recover with, naturally, a rather soured temper. He had fed back on his tracks and had been lying down in the patch of young cane.

This, I may say, is the only personal instance I have ever had, in twenty years of big game shooting, of an unprovoked attack by a wild beast.

A point I have not seen noted with regard to the cows is that the direction of their horns is so much backwards and inwards that the points often cross behind the head in an old female. It is usually stated that the finest bulls are solitary.